

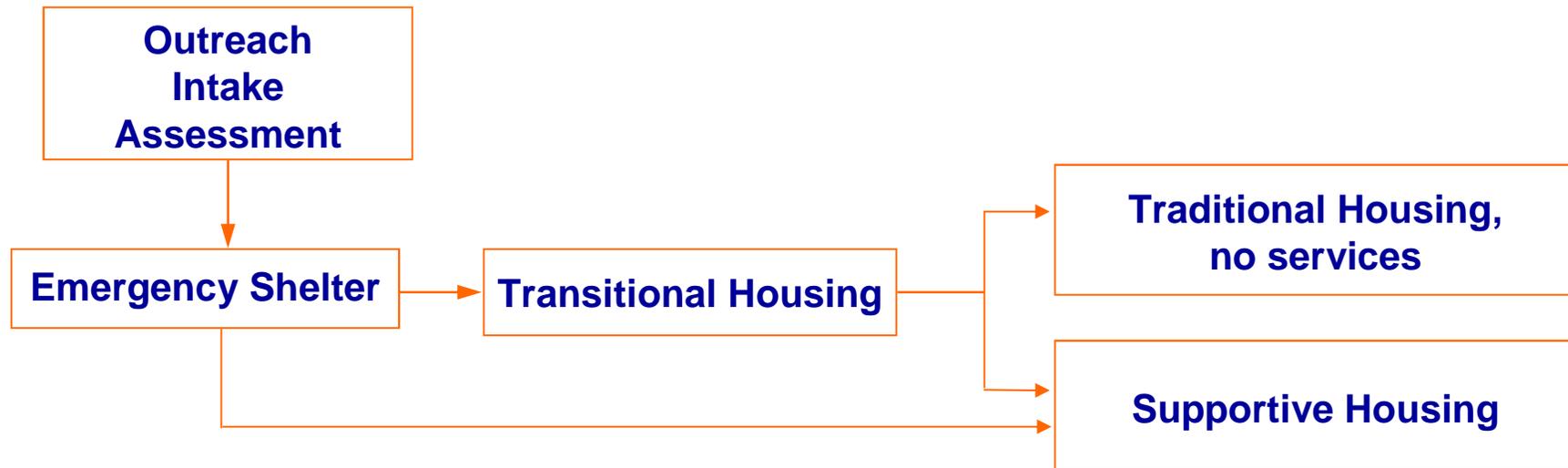
Serving Homeless Families through “Housing First”

Presented by
Beyond Shelter

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HUD CONTINUUM OF CARE MODEL



THE ‘HOUSING FIRST’ APPROACH

Moves homeless persons into permanent rental housing *as quickly as possible*, with services traditionally provided in *transitional* housing programs instead provided after relocation into permanent rental housing.

TWO PREMISES OF HOUSING

FIRST

Permanent housing should be the central goal of our work with people experiencing homelessness.

By providing permanent housing assistance immediately and up front, we can significantly reduce or eliminate the time people experience homelessness.

COMPONENTS OF HOUSING FIRST

§ Crisis Intervention and Stabilization

§ Intake, Assessment & Planning

§ Assistance Moving into Permanent Housing

§ Home-Based Case Management

(can be time-limited & transitional or longer-term, depending upon need)

STEP 1: CRISIS INTERVENTION & SHORT-TERM STABILIZATION

This phase usually includes emergency shelter services and short-term transitional housing geared to special needs, i.e. domestic violence, substance abuse treatment, stabilization, while efforts to access permanent housing are accomplished.

STEP 2: SCREENING, INTAKE & NEEDS ASSESSMENTS

Can occur immediately or after crisis intervention and emergency services have been provided.

The “needs assessment” should result in a Plan of Action, developed with the participant, and which can include both short- and long-term goals and concrete “next steps.”

STEP 3: ASSISTANCE MOVING INTO PERMANENT HOUSING

§ Overcoming barriers to accessing affordable housing.

§ Assistance applying for housing subsidies, move-in funds, etc.

§ Tenant/landlord education.

§ Assistance conducting housing search & negotiating with landlords.

STEP 4: PROVISION OF HOME-BASED CASE MANAGEMENT

§ Intensive during the first 90 days.

§ Intensifies during crises.

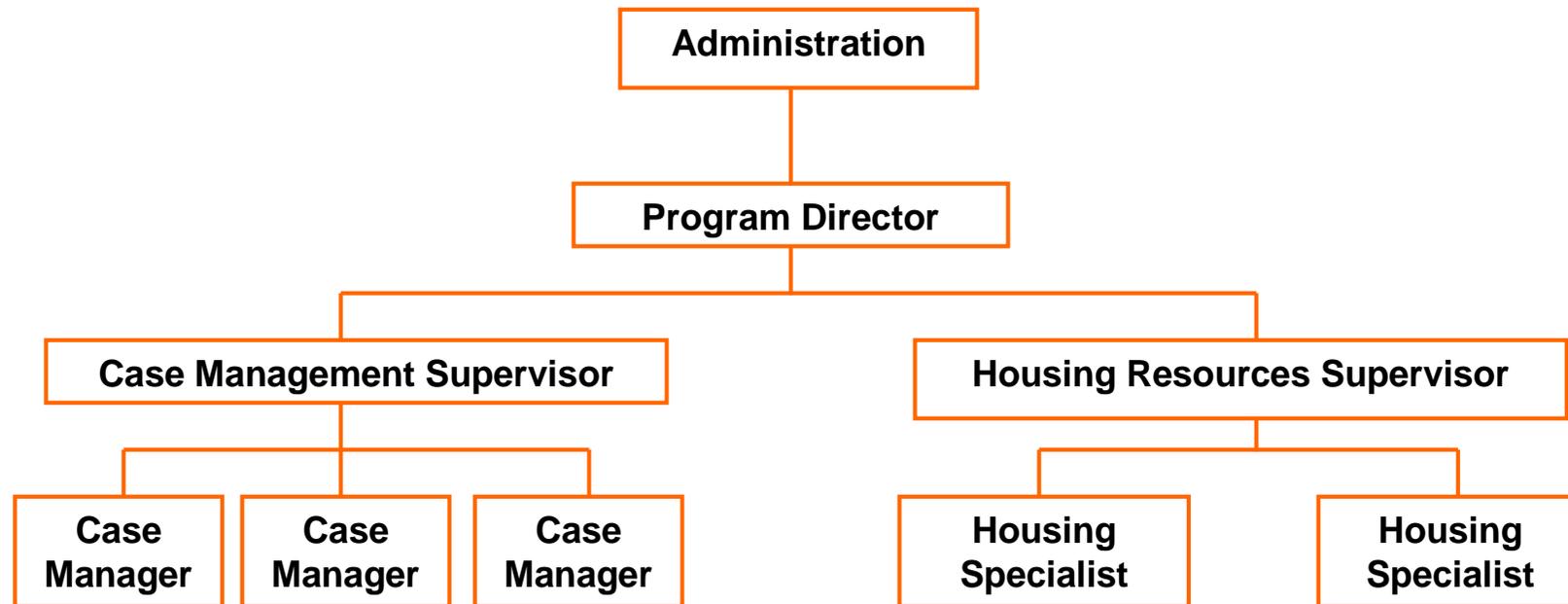
§ Includes connecting people to community resources and services to meet their particular needs.

§ May include longer-term case management for vulnerable and at-risk families and individuals.

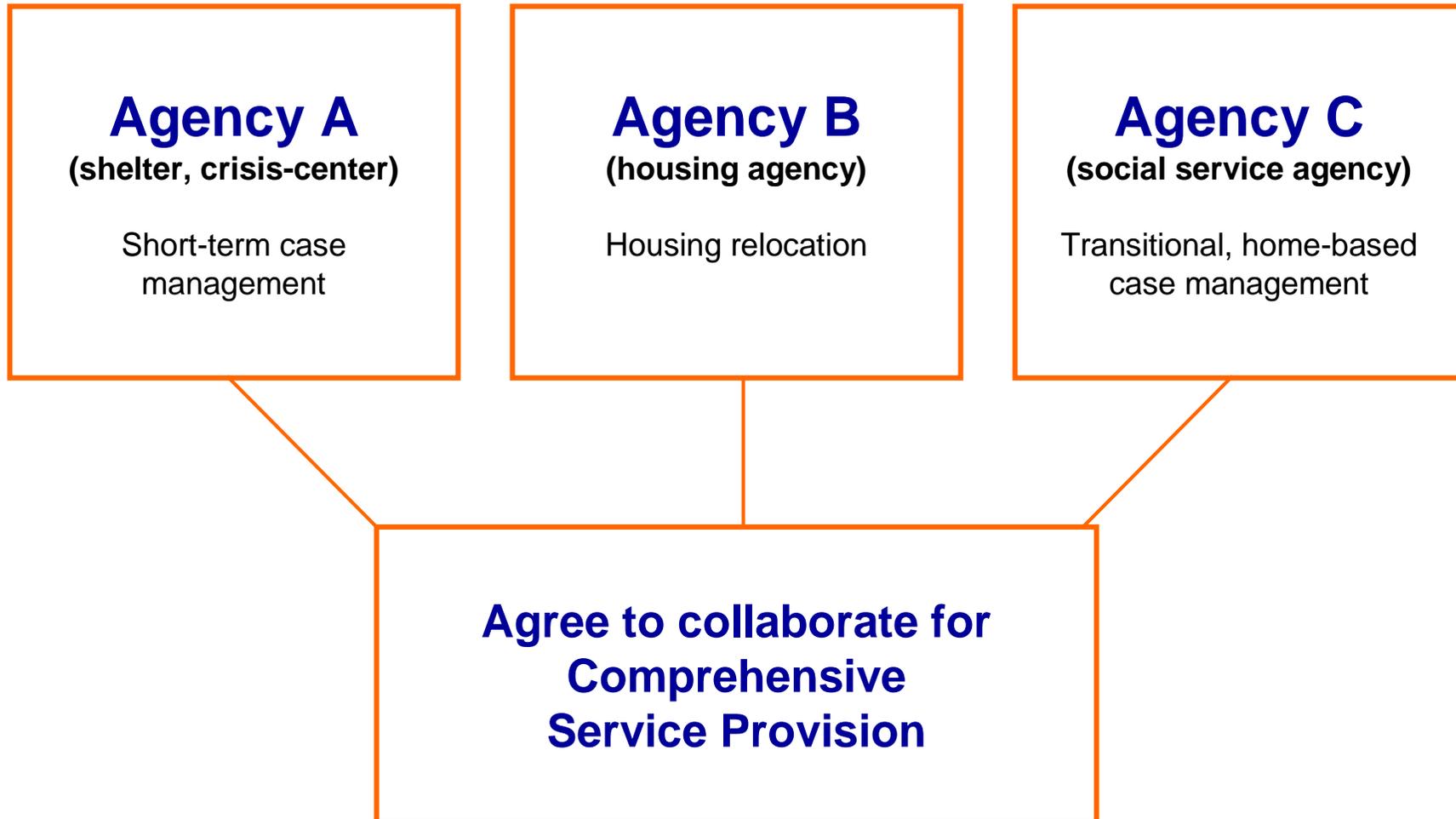
ADAPTATIONS

There is no single model for “housing first” programs. A “housing first” approach can be implemented by one agency or it can be accomplished through the collaboration of different agencies, each providing specific services.

A Sample Basic Model

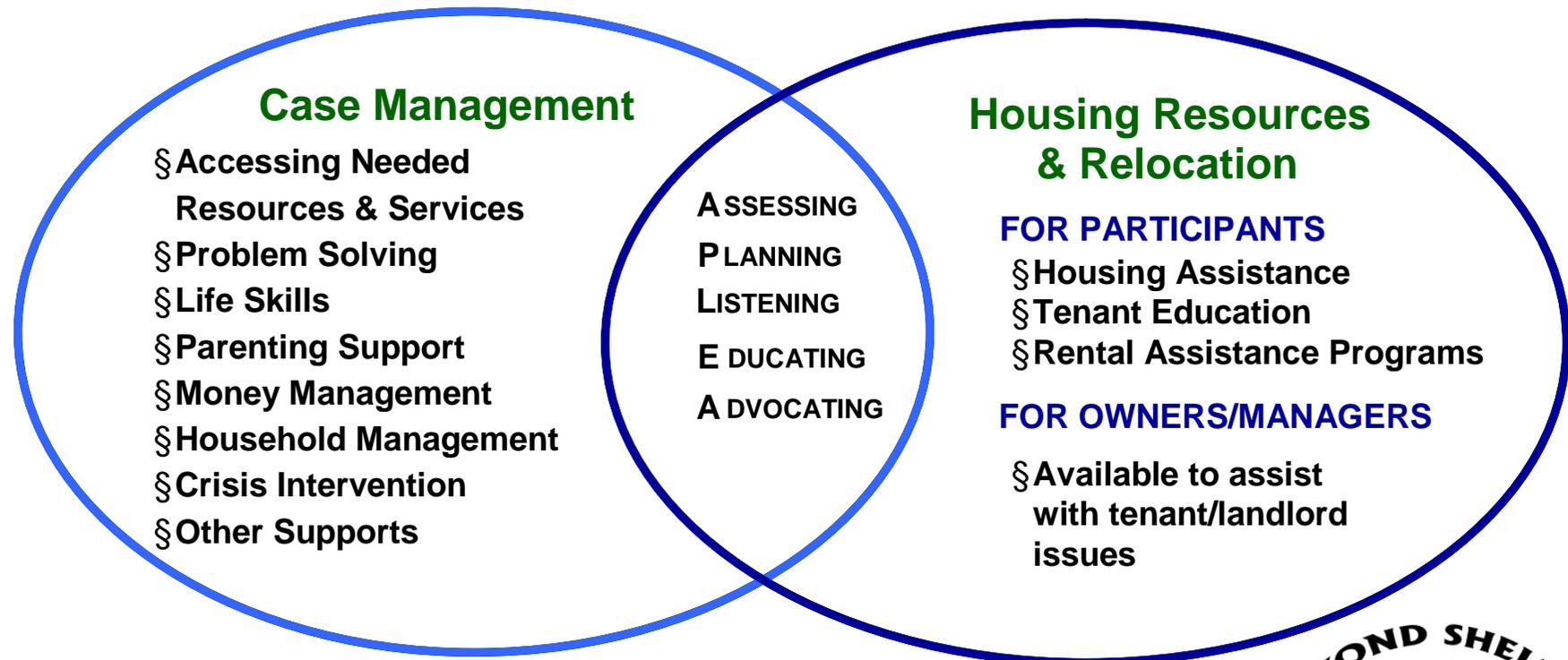


A Sample Collaborative Model



Housing First: Recognizes that Distinct Functions

Serve Different Participant Needs



Permanent Housing Services

The provision of services to help families' access and sustain housing includes working with the client to identify affordable units, access housing subsidies, negotiate leases, overcome barriers, such as poor tenant history, credit history and discrimination based on ethnicity, gender, family make-up and income sources.



Factors to Consider in Assessing History & Needs

Good housing assessment and planning takes into account family housing history and needs, as well as strives to honor and promote housing and neighborhood choice insofar as possible. The following factors are important to assess, as they will guide the development of housing plans:



Income/Budget

What resources does the family have?

Is the family receiving all benefits for which they qualify (TANF, child support, SSI, tax credits, etc.)?

What debts does the family have?



Employment History

What is the parent's work history?

Has the head of household worked recently?

What hourly wages has the HOH earned in the past?



Experience as a Tenant

Has the family ever held a lease in their name?

How many times has the family moved in the last 12-24 months?

How many times has the family been evicted?

What were the reasons for eviction?



Criminal History

Does the participant have a criminal record?

What was the nature of the offense(s)?

How long ago was the crime committed?

Is the participant on probation or parole?



Documentation

Does the family have documentation for all family members?

If not, what documents are missing and what steps need to be taken to replace them?



What to Look for...

Housing First Components:

1. FAMILY SIZE: This determines how many rooms the family will need. When possible, larger families are placed in houses, not apartments.



2. INCOME/BUDGET: What resources does the family have? Ideally, families should pay 25-30% of their income for rent. Often, however, families end up paying 50% or more.

Relocation plans are not based simply on the family's reported *income*. Their *debts* (outstanding utility bills, etc.) and other monthly expenses, such as childcare, transportation, and medication, will also determine what they can really afford for rent.



3. TENANT HISTORY: How many times has the family moved? How many times has the family been evicted? What were the reasons for eviction? Was there ever any destruction of property involved? Some of this information will be provided by the participant; previous landlords can also supply information.



4. SUBSTANCE ABUSE: Will the mother participate in a 12-step or other community-based recovery program? If so, the program in the new neighborhood is evaluated. Staff also avoid relocating the family to any neighborhoods in which the participant used drugs or alcohol in the past.



5. CRIMINAL HISTORY: In fairness to the participant, criminal history needs to be addressed on an individual basis and often requires the building of rapport to hear “the entire story.”



6. HOUSEKEEPING SKILLS: How proficiently does the participant clean her home, or do you expect them to clean their home? How much experience does the participant have with maintaining a home?

This is important to know should the participant have a landlord with high expectations for cleanliness. Asking about housekeeping practices also opens the door for discussing ways to maintain a home.



7. SUPPORT SYSTEMS: What support does the family have? Relatives? Friends? Do/will they attend a religious institution or are they members of any other organization? Do they want to move near those supports?

Systems of support are crucial to the long-term success of families. They serve as emotional, physical, mental and spiritual outlets that assist families with the daily challenges of living).



8. HOUSING ACCOMMODATIONS: Are any family members disabled and in need of special accommodations?

Sometimes multiple generations will live together, and older family members may have special needs to consider.



**9. PERSONALITY OF LANDLORD/
MANAGER:** Since landlords and property managers will be very important people in the lives of participants, staff members get to know them and ensure that they are trustworthy. At the very least, the landlord must be consistent and reliable.



10. SCHOOLS IN THE AREA:

Do the parents want to change schools or remain near the school their child(ren) currently attend(s)?



11. ACCESSIBILITY OF PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION: For most families, this is critical. Of course, if the family has a car, access to public transit may not be a top priority.



12. DISTANCE TO/FROM PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION: What services does the family need most? How will they get to those services? Are family members employed or do they go to school? If the family does not relocate near work, school or services, they need to be near public transportation.



13. CRIMINAL ACTIVITY IN THE AREA:

Is the neighborhood safe? What is it like at night? Sometimes it helps to ask the local police department about the incidence of crime in a given area.



14. PERSONALITY OF NEIGHBORS:

Case managers attempt to find out something about the neighbors as well as the neighborhood. When placing a family with children, consider whether there are children nearby or whether the neighbors appear to be intolerant of children.



15. COST OF UTILITIES: Are utilities included in the rent? If not, what sources of energy are used for cooking and heating? On average, what have tenants in that unit paid for utilities?



16. SOCIO-ECONOMIC CLIMATE OF THE COMMUNITY: Is the community racially integrated or is it homogeneous? Is there a mix of economic classes or does a particular socio-economic class predominate?



Housing Relocation Plan

A Housing Specialist helps the client to identify and off-set (as much as possible) barriers to securing housing.

The Housing Specialist also works with the client to identify appropriate, and reasonable, housing search goals.



Housing Resources

- 1. Newspapers' classified ads, "pennysavers" and other local publications (print and electronic).**
- 2. Property management companies – housing specialists look for these in the local "yellow pages" phone book or local apartment association.**



3. Real estate offices: the offices often have listings of rental housing, and agents may own or have investors who invest in rental properties.

4. "For Rent" signs – housing specialists look for units with advertised vacancies.



5. Local Housing Authorities (tenant-based vouchers for Section 8 and Shelter+Care).

6. Nonprofit developers (tax credit and project-based Section 8 properties).

§ Permanent supportive housing

§ Service-enriched housing



7. Private developers, including those in jurisdictions with inclusionary zoning ordinances.

8. Friends and relatives



9. Fellow members of clubs and organizations

§ Religious institutions

§ Social and civic organizations



Move-In Resources

1. DPSS.

2. DCFS.

§ Family Reunification Program

§ Other programs



Move-In Resources

- 3. Countywide move-in funds coordinated by Beyond Shelter.**
- 4. Victims of Crime/Police Depts.**



Move-In Resources

5. Family savings plans.



Housing Search Strategies:

Marketing & Outreach to Landlords



“Marketing” The Program

“Marketing” the program is one of the best tools to use in developing a pool of landlords and management companies who are willing to rent directly to your clients.





ACCESSING PRIVATE RENTAL HOUSING

§ Know What Landlords' Primary Wants
and Concerns Typically Are:

§ Rent paid on time

§ Someone to call

§ Property damage





ACCESSING PRIVATE RENTAL HOUSING

§ Craft Your “Selling Points” Accordingly:

§ Benefits to owners

§ Pre-screened tenants

§ Tenant education

§ Case management support (home visits; budgeting, household management assistance)

§ Landlord “hotline”

§ Organizational history of success

§ Educate and dispel myths/stereotypes



MARKETING MATERIALS

- § Agency and/or program brochures
- § One-page informational handouts
- § PowerPoint presentations
- § Program videos and PSAs



MARKET TO WHOM?

- § Large private landlords
- § Mom and pop landlords
- § Property management companies
- § Other entities...



MARKET AND OUTREACH: WHERE & HOW?

§ Cold Calls & Community Searches

§ Neighborhood searches – Targeted Outreach

§ Door to door

§ Internet listings

§ Newspapers (National vs local, community papers; “Pennysavers”; etc.)



§ Cold Calls & Community Searches (Cont'd)

- § Local Yellow Pages or local apartment association for listings of property management companies**
- § Real estate offices: the offices often have listings of rental housing, and agents may own or have investors who invest in rental properties**
- § Housing Authority lists (City, County, and/or State PHAs)**



Drive-by Searching Tips

To search neighborhoods in large urban areas, which might otherwise be overwhelming:

- § Pick an area between one and five square miles**
- § Search the selected area thoroughly**
- § Drive an area more than once, if necessary**



MARKET AND OUTREACH: WHERE & HOW? (Cont'd)

§ Networking

§ Associations (e.g., Apartment Owner's Assoc)

§ Los Angeles

§ Long Beach

§ Housing conferences (e.g., Southern California Association of Nonprofit Housing or SCANPH)

§ Informal opportunities (Always Be Thinking Housing!)



TENANT EDUCATION



Tenant Responsibilities Curriculum

§ Identifying housing that is suitable for your family.

§ Understanding your rental agreement, and when, where, how and to whom you pay your rent

§ How to be a good neighbor

§ Money management



- § **Maintaining your home on a budget**
- § **Identifying a maintenance problem and what to do about it**
- § **How to communicate with a “problem” landlord**
- § **Housing and sexual harassment**
- § **Getting involved in your community**



Tips for Initial Meetings with Landlords

A housing interview is just like a job interview...key questions to cover (Don't take anything for granted!):

§ What should you (ie, family) wear?

§ How should you present yourself and your story?



Tips for Initial Meetings with Landlords

- § How are you going to control the kids?
- § Have we thoroughly prepared in order to avoid surprises?



Maintaining Stable Housing & Positive Relationships with Landlords



Maintaining Good Relationships

- § **Follow-up with landlord – call regularly, get feedback on rental situation**
- § **Keep your commitments – respond within the timeframes promised; intervene/mediate when appropriate**



Take Necessary Action to Address Problems

- § More frequent home visits and phone contact
- § Reevaluate and adjust case plans
- § Linkages with community-based resources and services, including rent-to-prevent eviction, detox, DV counseling, etc.
- § Landlord-tenant mediation



Lessons Learned

- § **Be cautious about clustering multiple families in a single building**
- § **If possible, check the property status of prospective rental units/buildings due to the foreclosure crisis**
- § **Non-monetary incentives work with landlords**



Lessons Learned (Cont'd)

- § **Understand the needs and wants of landlords**
- § **Document, Document, Document all communications with landlords**
- § **Myth: landlords do not want to rent to homeless families or agencies serving them**



Lessons Learned (Cont'd)

- § **Landlords' relaxing screening criteria (e.g., overlooking an eviction) for your clients but not for the general public is not a violation of fair housing laws, which only cover protected classes (race, gender, creed, etc.)**
- § **Proof is in the pudding: landlords call us when they have vacancies.**



Maintaining Good Relationships

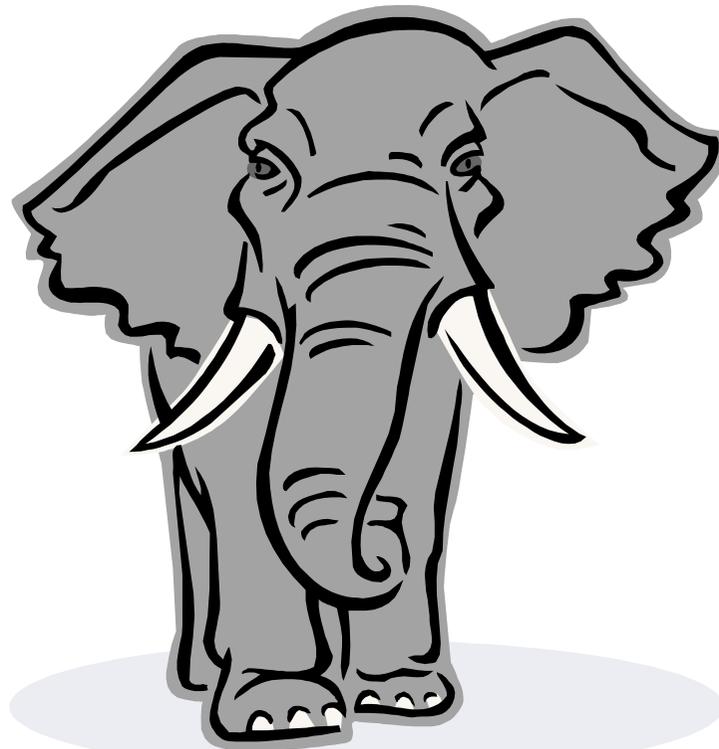
§ Go the EXTRA MILE

- § Host owner appreciation events, such as breakfasts; present plaques or certificates
- § Get to know something personal about the landlord i.e. birthday and send cards, or favorite football team and offer souvenirs, etc.

§ Remember...



Landlords are like elephants...they don't forget the good or the bad!



TRANSITIONAL
Home-Based
Case Management

The primary functions of home-based case management are to provide assistance to clients in life skills development and to link clients to other community organizations that provide services which they need. In Housing First, these services are most often “time-limited” and “transitional.”

They are often focused on helping the family overcome the trauma experienced during an episode of homelessness, to enable the family to regain stable living patterns or to develop stable living patterns for the first time.

Some clients require more intensive home visits that include demonstrations of house-keeping skills, money-management and budgeting, development of grocery lists, parenting support.

Others need only assistance in identifying resources in the community and monitoring/support to insure that they do not lose their housing if a crisis occurs.

THE FIRST THREE MONTHS

Experience has shown that formerly homeless families are most at risk for another episode of homelessness during the first 90 days in permanent housing.